000 matter. [P 65]

494 442 829 198 While the farmer does not favour the co-operative movement at present he is generally dissatisfied also with the pitkal system and complains of the excessive profits being made by the pitkal, the sensal (a broker and transporter of produce) and the retailer. Very few do however venture to evade these middlemen completely by selling their produce directly to the consumer (B/387, p.17). This is probably the result in part of shortage of labour but in part also a reflection of the 'respect' in which the pitkal is held. The farmer is characteristically suspicious of any change in such a long-established part of his farming, even though he is loud with complaints of it.

208 654 474 ●44 The Government plan to centralize marketing on the one hand and to encourage the co-operative movement in the selling of produce on the other will not succeed without a great deal of patient education of the farmer supplemented by material incentives such as subsidies and other assistance already given in other aspects of agricultural development. The most successful co-operatives in Maltese farming to date are probably the two tractor co-operatives founded with the initiative and grant of free equipment by C.A.R.E. (Section 2). Here the farmer has seen a clear financial saving in plowing costs with no capital outlay on his part. He must similarly be persuaded that centralization and Co-operatives in marketing would be to his advantage. Not only the farmers themselves but the consumers also would stand to benefit from a streamlining of marketing with grading and better packing and presentation of produce, while the improvements in Malta's position as an exporter of agricultural produce would fully justify the effort involved (B/253)[42].

YOUTH AND FARMING

464 184 178 In their pioneer investigation into the attitudes of the Maltese farmer Fr. Cirillo and his Royal University team stressed the crucial position of the younger generation in agriculture in the Islands (B/387). The present writer concurs with their views and considers the present retreat from farm and village is the most urgent problem in the industry. Something of the technical and economic background to this trend has been seen in Sections 2 and 3, but the social factors involved are no less important.

The fundamental contrast in outlook between the younger and older generations of the farming community today is that in the case of the older generation "with meagre opportunities in other occupations, and often